

WORD OF THE LORD

An Eloquent Sermon From the
Tabernacle Pulpit

GOD'S FINGER IN THE WORLD

Dr. Talmage Selects a Text From Exodus
and Preaches a Powerful Discourse.
A Peroration of Great Force.

BROOKLYN, Oct. 23.—The capacity of the Tabernacle was tested this morning by the vast crowd that filled it in every part as soon as the doors were opened. After reading and commenting on several passages of Scripture illustrative of God's providential dealings, Dr. Talmage gave out the hymn beginning:

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.

His sermon was on the text Exodus viii, 19, "The Finger of God."

Pharaoh was sulking in his marble throne room at Memphis. Plague after plague had come, and sometimes the Egyptian monarch was disposed to do better, but at the lifting of each plague he was as bad as before. The deacons of the palace, however, were compelled to recognize the divine movement, and after one of the most exasperating plagues of all the series they cried out in the words of my text, "This is the finger of God."—not the first nor the last time when bad people said a good thing. An old Philadelphia friend visiting me the other day asked me if I had ever noticed this passage of Scripture from which I today speak. I told him no, and I said right away, "That is a good text for a sermon."

We all recognize the hand of God and

know it is a mighty hand. You have

seen a man keep two or three rubber

balls flying in the air, catching and

pitching them so that none of them fell

to the floor, and do this for several min-

utes, and you have admired his dexter-

ity. But have you thought how the

hand of God keeps millions and millions

of round worlds, vastly larger than our

world, flying for centuries without let-

ting one fall? Wondrous power and

skill of God's hand! But about that I

am not to discourse. My text leads me

to speak of less than a fifth of the divine

hand. "This is the finger of God." Only

in two other places does the Bible

refer to this division of the omnipotent

hand. The rocks on Mount Sinai are

banned and very hard stone. Do you

imagine it was a child that cut the ten

commandments in that basalt? Not in

Exodus we read that the tables of stone

were "written with the finger of God."

Christ says that he cast out devils with

"the finger of God." The only instance

that Christ wrote a word he wrote not

with pen or parchment, but with his

finger on the ground. Yet, though so

seldom referred to in the Bible to

a part of God's hand, if you and I

keep our eyes open and our heart right

we will be compelled often to cry out,

"This is the finger of God." It is my

intention before long to begin a series

of sermons on "The Astronomy of the

Bible, or God Among the Stars;" "The

Ornithology of the Bible, or God Among

the Birds;" "The Pomology of the Bible,

or God Among the Orchards;" "The

Ichthyology of the Bible, or God Among

the Fishes;" "The Geology of the Bible,

or God Among the Rocks;" "The Wa-

ters of the Bible, or God Among the

Seas;" "The Zoology of the Bible, or

God Among the Beasts;" "The Precious

Stones of the Bible, or God Among the

Amethysts;" "The Conchology of the

Bible, or God Among the Shells;" "The

Botany of the Bible, or God Among the

Flowers;" "The Chronology of the

Bible, or God Among the Centuries;"

and I want this coming winter to get you

and get myself into the habit of seeing

the finger of God everywhere and in

everything; this morning I want to

induce you to look for the finger of

God in your personal affairs.

PROVIDENTIAL GESTURES.

To most of us gestulation is natural.

If a stranger accost you on the street

and ask you the way to some place, it is

as natural as to breathe for you to level

your forefinger this way or that. Not

one out of a thousand of you would

stand with your hands by your side and

make no motion with your finger. What-

ever you may say with your lips is em-

phasized and reinforced and translated

by your finger. Now God in the dear

old Book says to us innumerable things

by the way of direction. He plainly tells

us the way to go. But in every instance

of our life, if we will only look, we will

find a providential gesture and a pro-

vidential pointing, so that we may con-

fidently say, "This is the finger of God."

Two or three times in my life, when

perplexed on questions of duty after

that except as the last resort and with a

devoutness that leaves absolutely all

with God.

For much that concerns us we have

no responsibility, and we need not make

appeal to the Lord for direction. We

are not responsible for most of our sur-

roundings. We are not responsible for the

country of our birth, nor for whether

we are Americans, or Norwegians, or

Scandinavians, or Irishmen or English-

men. We are not responsible for the

age in which we live. We are not re-

sponsible for our temperament, be it

nervous or phlegmatic, bilious or san-

guine. We are not responsible for our

features, be they homely or beautiful.

We are not responsible for the height or

smallness of our stature. We are not

responsible for the fact that we are men-

tally dull or brilliant. For the most of

our environments we have no more re-

sponsibility than we have for the mol-

lusk at the bottom of the Atlantic

ocean. Oh, I am so glad that there are

about five hundred thousand things that

we are not responsible for! Do not blame

us for being in our manner cold as an

iceberg or nervous as a cat amid a pack

of Fourth of July firecrackers. If you

are determined to blame somebody

blame our great-grandfathers or great-

grandmothers who died before the Revo-

lutionary war, and who may have had

habits depressing and ruinous. There

are wrong things about all of which

nature bemoans that one hundred and

fifty years ago there was some terrible

crank in our ancestral line. Realize

that and it will be a relief semi-infinite.

Let us take ourselves as we are this

moment, and then ask "which way?" Get

all the direction you can from careful

and constant study of the Bible, and

then look up and look out and look

around and see if you can find the finger

of God.

LINCOLN'S WISE DELAY.

It is a remarkable thing that some-

times no one can see that finger but

yourself. A year before Abraham Lin-

coln signed the proclamation of emanci-

pation the White House was thronged

with committees and associations, minis-

ters and laymen, advising the president

to make that proclamation. But he wait-

ed and waited, and amid scoff and anathema,

because he did not himself see the finger

of God. After awhile, and at just the

right time, he saw the divine pointing

and signed the proclamation. The dis-

tinguished Confederates, Mason and

Sidwell, were taken off an English vessel

by the United States government. "Don't

give them up," shouted all the northern

states. "Let us have war with England

rather than surrender them," was the al-

most unanimous cry of the north. But

William H. Seward saw the finger of

God leading in just the opposite di-

rection, and the Confederates were given

up and we avoided a war with England,

which at that time would have been the

demolition of the United States govern-

ment. In other words, the finger of God

as it directs you may be invisible to

everybody else. Follow the divine point-

ing as you see it, although the world may

call you a fool. There has never been a

man or a woman who amounted to any-

thing that has not sometimes been called

a fool. Nearly all the mistakes that you

and I have made have come from our

following the pointing of some other fin-

ger instead of the finger of God. But

now, suppose all forms of disaster close

in upon a man. Suppose his business

collapses. Suppose he buys goods and

cannot sell them. Suppose by a new in-

vention others can furnish the same

goods at less price. Suppose a cold

spring or a late autumn or the coming

of an epidemic corners a man, and he

notes come due and he cannot meet

them, and his rent must be paid and

there is nothing with which to pay it,

and the wages of the employees are due

and there is nothing with which to meet

that obligation, and the bank will not

discount, and the business friends to

whom he goes for accommodation are in

the same predicament, and he bears up

and struggles on until, after awhile, he

crashes upon the whole concern.

BETTER TREASURES THAN MONEY.

He stands wondering and saying: "I

do not see the meaning of all this. I

have done the best I could. God knows

I would pay my debts if I could, but

here I am hedged in and stopped."

What should that man do in that case?

Go to the Scriptures and read the

promise about all things working to-

gether for good and kindred passages?

That is well. But he needs to do some-

thing besides read the Scriptures. He

needs to look for the finger of God that

is pointing toward better treasures; that

is pointing toward eternal release; that

is urging him to higher realms. No human

finger ever pointed to the east or west

and made a man so certain as the

finger of God is pointing that troubled

man to higher and better spiritual re-

sources than he has ever enjoyed. There

are men of vast wealth who are as rich

as heaven as they are for this world,

but they are exceptions. If a man

gains in grace, it is generally before he

gets \$100,000 or after he loses it. If a

man has plenty of railroad securities and

has applied to his banker for more; if

he has bought a house for fifty per-

cent, in value; if he had hard work to

get the door of his fireplace safe shut

because of a new roll of securities he

put in there just before looking up at

night; if he is speculating in a falling

market or a rising market and things

take for him a right turn, he does not

grow in grace very much that week. In

fact, the only way to make the great revival

of 1857, when more people were con-

verted to God, probably, than in any

year since Christ was born! It was the

defeat and bankruptcy that swept

American prosperity so flat that it could

fall no flatter. I am speaking of whole

sections of men. Such men are so broken

by calamity that they are humbled and

fly to God for relief. Men who have no

spirit and never expect anything are not

much affected by financial changes. They

are so set up to the kingdom under one

set of circumstances as another. They

are dead as do the dead wherever they

are. The only way to get rid of it

will never see them again. I have tried

that plan and it works well. But I am

speaking of the effect of misfortune on

high spirited men. Nothing but trial

will turn such men from earth to heaven.

It is only through clouds and darkness

and whirlwind of disaster such a man

can see the finger of God.

WISDOM'S UNEXPECTED.

A most interesting as well as a most

useful study is to watch the pointing of

the finger of God. In the Seventeenth

century South Carolina was yielding

rich and unproductive and her chief

productions. But Thomas Smith noticed

that the ground near his house in

Charleston was very much like the places

in Madagascar where he had raised rice,

and some of the Madagascar rice was

sown there and grew so rapidly that

South Carolina was to make rice her

chief production. Can you not see the

finger of God in that incident? Rev.

John Fletcher, of England, many will

know, was one of the useful ministers

of the Gospel who ever preached. Be-

fore conversion he joined an army and

had bought his ticket on the ship for

South America. The morning he was

to sail some one spilled on him a kettle

of water, and he was so mad he could

not go. He was very much disappoint-

ed, but the ship was going to sail on

went out and was never heard of again.

Who can doubt that God was arranging

the life of John Fletcher? Was it

merely accidental that Richard Rodda,

a Cornish miner, who was on his knees

praying, remained unhurt, though heavy

stones fell before him and behind him,

and on either side of him, and another

fell on top of these so as to make a roof

over him?

A missionary in Jamaica lost his way,

and in the night was wandering about

when a firefly flashed and revealed a

precipice over which in a moment more

he would have been dashed. F. W.

Robertson, the great preacher of Brit-

tain, England, had his life work decided

by the barking of his dog. A neighbor

whose daughter was ill was disturbed

by the barking of that dog one night.

This brought the neighbor into com-

munion with Robertson. That acquaint-

ance kept him from joining the

dragons and going to India and spend-

ing his life in military service, and re-

served him for a pulpit the influence of

which for Gospelization will resound for

all time and all eternity.

Why did not Columbus sink when in

early manhood he was about six miles

from the beach with nothing to sustain

him till he could swim?—and land by a

boat's oar? I wonder if his preservation

had anything to do with America? Had

the storm that diverted the Mayflower

from the mouth of the Hudson for which

it was sailing and sent it ashore at Cape

Cod no divine supervision? Does an-